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## U.S.-Israeli Strategy Fought By Pentagon

President Reagan's new Lebanon strategy seems to have been misplaced somewhere in the Pentagon's thousands of look-alike cubbyholes. He wants to tighten U.S. ties to Israel and confront Syria with an Israeli-American military threat. This is the best way to get a settlement out of the Syrians, he now apparently believes.

So on Oct. 29 Reagan signed a secret National Security Decision Directive calling for closer strategic coordination with Israel. This was followed, according to confidential documents, by a call for "combined planning," "joint exercises" and "repositioning of U.S. military equipment in Israel."

But a directive can get mislaid in the Pentagon—if it propounds a policy the generals don't like. Few, of course, would risk openly defying the commander-in-chief's explicit order. So, instead, the unwanted directive is merely cast adrift in the Pentagon's labyrinth of dead ends.

This is what's happening to the president's strategy for dealing with the Lebanese crisis. The military chiefs "are simply not willing to im-

plement the White House decision," a high administration official told my associate Lucette Lagnado.

The White House and State Department, on the other hand, are trying to implement the new strategy. They had hoped, for example, to complete three specific accords with Israel during Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's recent visit: to establish medical cooperation; to approve joint military exercises and to coordinate strategy in Lebanon.

But the seasoned officers at the Pentagon have learned that any presidential directive they oppose might fade away if only they study it long enough. So a week before Shamir arrived, they protested that the proposed accords couldn't be put into operation without careful study.

They succeeded in setting aside the accords and creating a joint U.S.-Israeli committee to study them. This panel, the Joint Political-Military Group (JPMG), has managed at least to set an agenda. According to a confidential document:

"The JPMG will meet in January. It is expected that at least medical cooperation may be finalized at this meeting. The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. [John W.] Vessey, will visit Israel in January." This modest schedule, of course, is subject to further obstruction.

The paradox is that the Pentagon opposes military pressure, while the civilian leaders favor a show of

strength. The White House has despaired of a diplomatic solution.

This has led to bitter debate. I have been privy to the secret exchanges, including briefing papers.

The Pentagon strategists argue that the spectacle of the Americans and Israelis in military lockstep will frighten moderate Arab nations and jeopardize relations with them.

Counters one briefing paper: "The moderate Arabs are anti-Israel, but they fear Arab radicalism more . . . . Lebanon and Jordan want the U.S. to protect them from Syria."

The Pentagon strategists, noting the speed with which the Soviet Union rearmed Syria last year, doubt whether U.S.-Israeli military posturing will impress either the Syrians or the Soviets. But the White House strategists say they believe military power is the only argument they understand.

With U.S. and Soviet power arrayed on opposite sides of the Lebanon dispute, warn the brass, there is danger of confrontation. Responds a briefing paper: "Working together to restore the balance in the region actually reduces the risk by reducing the incentives to aggression."

The military also argues that the United States and Israel have different goals: the Americans are anti-Soviet, the Israelis anti-Syrian. "A false distinction," the paper says, concluding: "What is the alternative? Let the Soviets and radicals win?"